

SYMPOSIUM

1262

The
Symposium Opera
Collection
Volume 3

Charles Dalmores
&
Louis Cazette



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CHARLES DALMORES (1871-1939)

It may be that the name Henry Alphonse Brin does not have an operatic ring about it and has no resonance in operatic annals, but he did, it would seem, make a first appearance singing Loge in a concert performance of *Das Rheingold* in Lyon in 1899 as Charles Brin. This was before both the first staged performance of that opera in France and the 'official' stage début of the completely re-named Charles Dalmores. The accuracy of the preceeding is unverifiable, but at this point legend certainly takes over. Expressed differently, but in terms that Rossini's Don Basilio would certainly appreciate, speculation gives way to rumour and becomes fact. Most authorities state that his official début was as the eponymous hero in the very first performance of *Siegfried* in France, at the Théâtre des Arts in Rouen. The year is usually given as 1899, but Loewenberg's *Annals of the Opera* has February 1900. Given that few tenors make their first appearances on stage in major Wagnerian roles, and, if they do, may not live - in a vocal sense - to tell the tale, the legend should perhaps be checked with some thoroughness. On the face of it, Dalmores could have been the great exception. Much later, in the 1915-1916 season, when the Chicago Opera Association mounted its first complete *Ring* cycle, Dalmores was on hand to sing Siegmund, even though his major work with the company was in quintessentially French operas by Massenet, Gounod, Offenbach and Charpentier.

Dalmores was born in Nice and commenced his musical education as a budding French horn player. Indeed, he played with both the Cologne and Lamoureux Orchestras, and was appointed to teach horn playing at Lyons University - all this whilst in his early twenties. However, he was attracted to singing, above all to opera, and took his first lessons with Dauphin around the same time, and then for his main study was with Frantz Emerich in Germany. Then his operatic début at the relatively ripe age of twenty eight was as a full blown dramatic tenor, soon able to sing the heaviest of all Wagnerian roles. . . but not quite yet.

Massenet's *Hérodiade* was the offering for the the opening night of the 1899-1900 season at Rouen's Théâtre des Arts with Dalmores as Jean. It seems likely that this took place in early October 1899, and was his true stage début. Rouen's was a theatre with an ambitious management. Before the end of October audiences had also been able to see Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* and *Les Huguenots*, Gounod's *Mireille* and *Faust*, and Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*. Advance announcements already included the first French *Siegfried* and Berlioz's *La Prise de Troie*; though it is not clear whether the latter was actually

performed. Dalmores sang Raoul in *Les Huguenots* and, along with the rest of the cast, was enthusiastically applauded. His next charted rôle, during November, was as the lead in *Samson et Dalila*. Strangely, he had not been selected for the first performance of this work. Within a couple of weeks Dalmores was singing yet another huge dramatic rôle, that of Jean in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*. Interestingly, this performance raised some negative comments - according to *Le Monde Musicale* jealousy on the part of others and his own fatigue both played a part. Given that this was Dalmores' first season, that there were other tenors in the repertory company, and that he had already sung at least four major rôles, there is perhaps no need for surprise at either suggestion. Samson, Jean in *Le Prophète* and in *Hérodiade* and Raoul were the basis for essaying what is surely the heaviest part in the tenor repertoire: Siegfried. The performance of 17 February 1900 could be considered the culmination of Dalmores' apprenticeship.

Presumably the Rouen season was sufficient to bring Dalmores to the notice of the opera world. Thus for the 1900-1901 season he was engaged by the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, then enjoying its own golden age under the direction of Maurice Kufferath. In six seasons there he sang some fifteen different roles, most, if not all, heavy dramatic. They included Siegfried (*Die Götterdämmerung*), Siegmund, Lohengrin, Tristan, Jean (*Le Prophète*), Samson and Raoul. In addition, he created the rôle of Lancelot in Chausson's *Roi Arthus*. He was in the cast of the first performances at La Monnaie of *Louise*, *Tosca*, *Alceste* and *La Damnation de Faust*. Other parts included Faust in Gounod's opera and Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Apart from the absence of works by Massenet but for *Hérodiade*, the Brussels years could be considered as laying the bedrock for Dalmores' future career. It seems almost certain that everything was sung in French.

Early in the summer of 1902 Dalmores returned to Paris to appear in a major Wagnerian season at the Théâtre Chateau d'Eau. He sang Siegfried with Félicia Litvinne as Brünnhilde in the first French production of *Die Götterdämmerung*, and was complimented for his fresh voice and fine timbre. There is a suggestion in Stoulig's *Annales* that his singing was occasionally 'choppy'. However, the same critic felt that some days later when he sang Tristan - again opposite Litvinne - the problem had been overcome, and the diction was more natural. Curiously, Dalmores does not seem to have sung again in Paris until 1911 when he appeared in *Siegfried* at the Opéra. His last appearances there were two years later in *Salome* (Strauss) and *Die Götterdämmerung*.

During what was a veritable golden age of French singers and indeed for French opera, Dalmores devoted a large part of his career to the Anglo-Saxon world. French opera featured reasonably prominently at Covent Garden, whilst in the United States it was the

cornerstone of the repertoire for both Hammerstein's Manhattan Company and the Chicago companies which followed. Dalmores made his debut at Covent Garden in 1904 in *Faust*, followed by appearances in both operas of a double bill: Massenet's *La Navarraise* and Saint-Saëns' *Hélène*. In that first season he also sang Don José in *Carmen* and Jean in *Hérodiade*, the latter renamed *Salomé* at the behest of the censors. In both these operas Emma Calvé was the soprano. The following season Destinn was his *Carmen* and he also sang in *Faust*, *Roméo et Juliette* and a new opera by Leoni: *L'Oracolo*. Thereafter he did not return to the house until 1909 when he sang in *Faust*, *Louise* and *Samson et Dalila*, roles repeated in each of the following two seasons. In 1910 he also appeared in Laparra's *La Habanera*. This summary of his Covent Garden appearances does not quite complete the survey of Dalmores' European career. During 1907 and 1908 he appeared in Berlin, Cologne and Vienna and sang Lohengrin at the Bayreuth Festival. It would be interesting to know more about these performances. As already indicated, in Belgium and France he presumably sang everything in French, and this would be equally true for Covent Garden, apart presumably from *L'Oracolo*. During the European part of his career he sang in many of the great Wagnerian works. However, by the time he first visited the United States he was also firmly established as one of the greatest exponents of the major lyrical and dramatic roles of French opera. Language may have played a part in determining the direction of his career, although his few recordings in other than French do not suggest any problems. More likely, it was a matter of choice - his own, the managements' or both.

Oscar Hammerstein's challenge to Metropolitan supremacy in New York was particularly built on French repertoire. He met, heard and signed Dalmores in Brussels. According to John Cone, chronicler of the Manhattan Opera Company, Dalmores had already agreed a four year contract with Lisbon, but he broke this when Hammerstein offered to pay the forfeit of \$4,000. Dalmores made his début in *Faust* on 7 December 1906 and was described as 'easily in the foremost rank of tenors who have sung in New York'. Critics commended his stage presence, manly appearance and fine acting. As Don José a week later he was 'resplendent in voice and action'. That same season he also sang in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. In November 1907, at short notice, Dalmores replaced Léon Cazauran and took on the taxing part of the hero in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*; he was clearly not over-shadowed by Maurice Renaud's sensational performance in the baritone rôles. On the 25th of the month Dalmores featured in a performance described as making 'operatic history in the United States': the very first performance at the Manhattan of Mary Garden. The opera was *Thaïs* and once again Dalmores replaced the aforesaid Léon Cazauran. The latter, incidentally, did not make his own début with the company until almost the year

end, when he sang Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, was the weakest member of the cast, and had the supreme insult of being advised by one critic to 'experiment with other callings'.

The performances of *Thaïs* were a crucial step for French opera in the United States and the principals, Dalmores, Garden and Renaud, were to become the staple for the next decade both at the Manhattan and later in Chicago. Dalmores was hailed as 'superb', singing with 'great beauty of tone' and bringing 'the dignity of his splendid physique to the rôle of Nicias'. The partnership with Garden was triumphantly revived early in January 1908 with the United States première of *Louise*. Dalmores' remaining opera in his second season with the Manhattan was *La Navarraise*.

The following season Dalmores was soon in action, sharing the leading tenor parts with Zenatello. *Thaïs* was repeated on the second night of the season; two days later Dalmores sang Samson opposite the Dalila of Gerville-Reache. He also appeared as Herod in *Salome*, sung in French. His final rôle was Pelléas in a star-studded revival of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which included Garden and Vieuille, two of those who had created the opera in Paris. On this occasion Dalmores was evidently less successful. According to John Cone in his history of the Manhattan, ' (He was) too vital a figure, (and) seemed woefully miscast as the dreamy, shadowy, legendary creature'.

Dalmores was obviously on much more familiar ground when he sang Jean in *Hérodiade* on the opening night of the fourth and final Manhattan season. This time his leading lady was Lina Cavalieri. Clearly Dalmores was in superb form although according to one critic his costume 'hardly evoked the image of one who had fed on locusts and wild honey'. Later in the season Alvarez took on the part of Jean. For Dalmores the partnership with Garden was renewed with his next three performances in *Faust*, and in the first American performances of Massenet's *Sapho* and *Grisélidis*.

As we now know, the curtain was slowly going down on the Manhattan, and on an exciting phase of operatic history in the United States. Dalmores was a stalwart of the company to the end; on the very last afternoon of the season he repeated his Pelléas; yet again with Garden. It remains to add that during company tours Dalmores also appeared in Philadelphia, Boston, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Washington.

The collapse of the Manhattan led directly to the emergence of the Chicago Grand Opera, the first resident international company in that city. Many of Hammerstein's finest singers moved to Chicago, which for the next few years was the North American centre for the French repertoire. During November 1910 Dalmores appeared as Don José, Faust and Herod. As the gateway to the mid-West, Chicago could, at the time, be not

unreasonably described as a centre for puritanism. Thus and it may not be surprising that *Salome* caused both a sensation and a scandal. Mary Garden was blistering on the police chief who came to close down the opera, 'I ignore the illiterate'. Dalmores was little more circumspect when the third Chicago performance was cancelled, 'Chicago will be the laughing-stock of Europe'. Interestingly, when the opera was taken to Milwaukee it allegedly attracted an audience of some five thousand and was received with universal applause. In December Dalmores appeared in *Thaïs*, again with Garden and Renaud, and then repeated his Hoffmann.

Dalmores and Gerville-Reache opened the 1911-1912 season in *Samson et Dalila*. The following month he sang Faust and Hoffmann, but sandwiched between them was Siegmund in *Die Walküre*. This was almost certainly his first American appearance in Wagner, his first American opera sung in any language other than French, and his first Siegmund since Brussels. Others in the cast were Saltzman-Stevens, Schumann-Heink and Whitehill. On 2 January he sang his first American *Lohengrin*. According to the chronology in Ronald Davies' *Opera in Chicago* Dalmores repeated his Siegmund on 8 January, Hoffmann on 9 January, Lohengrin on 10 January and Nicias in *Thaïs* on 11 January, with another Lohengrin on 13 January. One suspects some errors since this seems inconceivable. By the end of the season he had also sung Tristan - again for the first time in many years.

The next season saw Dalmores repeating many of his previous rôles including Hoffmann, Jean (*Hérodiade*) and Siegmund, until on 17 January 1913 he sang in *Tosca*. This was not his first United States appearance in the work. At the time there was a good deal of interchange between singers at the Chicago and Boston operas; thus on 2 December 1912 Dalmores, Garden and Vanni-Marcoux sang *Tosca* in Boston. It is alleged that overly realistic acting on the part of Tosca and Scarpia caused something of a scandal. Meanwhile as Cavaradossi, Dalmores 'left an unforgettable impression. . . romantic, Byronic, virile, he sang with surprising freshness. . . and with a new and stirring tang of baritone quality. . . manlike and not tenor-like'. As if to confirm that Dalmores was moving on from the purely French repertoire, to which he had largely been confined since arriving in the America, on 30 January he appeared in Zandonai's *Conchita*, one of his rare forays into the world of verismo. Meanwhile he also sang his very first *Parsifal* on 11 January. At a matinée the previous day he had appeared in *Thaïs*. Interestingly, he did not sing Parsifal again when it was repeated on 18 January. Clearly, there were no vocal problems since he repeated his Julien in *Louise* on the 22nd and by the end of the month had also sung Hoffmann and Siegmund.

Perhaps as a result of over-adventurous repertoire the Chicago Grand Opera ceased to exist after this season and there was no opera in the city until 1915-1916 when the renamed Chicago Opera Association emerged. The highlight of that season was a complete Ring with Dalmores as Siegmund. The first new rôle for him was Wilhelm Meister in *Mignon* - indeed this may have been the first time he had sung this part anywhere. With a cast which included Conchita Supervia, Alice Verlet and Marcel Journet one might have expected it to receive more attention in the two histories of opera in Chicago than is the case. The other novelty was the première for the United States of Massenet's posthumously published *Cléopâtre*, which had hitherto only been performed at Monte Carlo. Given that Dalmores was nearing the end of his career it seems almost unbelievable that his next new Chicago rôle, early in the 1916-7 season, was Jean in *Le Prophète*, which he had last sung in Brussels. His final appearance in Chicago, and as far as is known on any opera stage, was in the world première of *Le Sauteriot* conducted by its composer S. Lazzari. This opera, long sunk without trace, brought down the curtain on the career of one of the most remarkable of French tenors.

Dalmores built his career essentially on the vogue for French opera. On records there is a good deal of fine lyrical singing, although the major impact on the listener is likely to be the sheer dramatic power of the voice. This is perhaps a point of similarity with Georges Thill in the next generation. Dalmores' vocal attributes enabled him successfully to sing both lyrical and dramatic parts, and thus to be equally at home in Massenet and in Meyerbeer. Comments by the Boston critic, Parker, about baritonal, manlike qualities seem appropriate. His recording of 'Ah si ben mio' from *Il Trovatore* is very reminiscent of Caruso's. Interestingly, he seems totally at ease singing Italian, even though he hardly appeared in any Italian operas and never in any by Verdi. He clearly had the vocal strength to sing Wagner, although in the end his works played only a limited part in the singer's career. His one Wagner recording, 'Atmest du nicht' from *Lohengrin* must be one of the most beautiful performances on disc, whilst lacking none of the dramatic qualities, and he sounds quite at ease in the German language. All his records were made around the middle of his career when his voice and artistry were presumably at their peak. Typical of many golden age French artists, his enunciation is always exemplary. Collectors will inevitably bemoan the absence of recordings from the first and last phases of his career, and will hope that an unpublished 'Niun mi tema' from *Otello* might still surface. Of his personal life all we seem to know is that he was of Jewish origin, changed his name, liked sports and, in retirement, taught singing.

LOUIS CAZETTE (1887-1922)

In many ways it is hard to imagine a greater contrast between two tenors than that between Dalmores and Cazette. There is some small overlap in repertoire, but none in recorded legacy. Cazette stands in a great tradition of purely lyrical French singing. A tragically short career inevitably meant somewhat lesser fame than that reserved for Clement, Devries, Friant and Villabella. It seems unlikely that Cazette ever sang outside France, and hardly ever outside Paris. His legacy rests in a few records made during his all too brief operatic career. The news of Cazette's death reached the editors of *Nos Vedettes* as it was about to go to press. The obituary is simple, "he was destined for the most brilliant lyric career".

Curiously, he too changed his name; from Victor Louis Camille Peault. A superb article in *Record Collector* gives much background information on his life and family as well as documenting in some detail his short career. Cazette graduated with top marks from the Conservatoire National de Musique in 1914. His main teacher there was the retired tenor, Albert Saléza. He also studied over a long period with Jan Reder. Under more circumstances he would have joined the Opéra Comique immediately, but war had been declared and Cazette did not start his singing career proper until 1919.

For just three years he was an increasingly valued member of the company. We need to remember that the Opéra Comique offered opera in repertory. Thus Cazette had plenty of opportunities to sing, but, with other valued tenors in the company, during much of the time he was singing small, comprimario parts. Hall lists a total of thirteen rôles; starting with a very minor part in *Louise* in June 1919. His next rôle was Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, and this was the major part which he sang with the greatest frequency.

A programme for the performance on 21 September 1920 demonstrates the company's strength. Cazette sang the lead opposite Marguerite Carré. The cast included another superb lyric tenor, Villabella as Yamadori and Panzera as the Imperial Commissioner. One of Cazette's most successful assumptions was Ferrando in *Così fan Tutte*. According to the *Annuaire des Artistes* it revealed Cazette as a great artist.

He sang in three operas which were new to the Opéra Comique: Février's *Gismonda*, Lazzari's *Le Sauteriot*, and what was also the world première of Moret's *Lorenzaccio*. These works have little resonance for us, but the company did its best for them. The cast for *Le Sauteriot* also included Brothier, Raveau and Panzera, whilst Vanni-Marcoux sang the name part in *Lorenzaccio*. By way of contrast, Cazette's big rôles in operas which

retain a place in the repertoire - in addition to Pinkerton and Ferrando - were in *Mireille*, *Mignon*, *Lakmé* and *Don Giovanni*. Hall suggests that in just three years Cazette gave some two hundred performances in all. Even so, it seems likely that he may also have appeared in other French centres. He certainly sang Gérald in a single performance of *Lakmé* in Verviers in February 1922.

Cazette died of tetanus on 30 April 1922. Various theories have been offered on what was the cause. Both Hall, quoting Cazette's daughter in law, and Jean Gourret, the indefatigable historian of opera in Paris, suggest that there was an accident in rehearsal and Cazette was cut by a trident held by André Bauge. Thanks to Hall we also know much more about Cazette's private life than is the case with Dalmores. He was married twice; he left two children who were actually brought up by a third woman, a close friend he had met during the war, and their education was later paid for by the Opéra Comique.

Inevitably it is a very small recorded legacy: a mere eleven published records, all made for the French branch of the Gramophone Company. These records, especially the six operatic sides, contain much wonderful singing. Indeed the little known aria from *Grisélidis*, which was coupled with an aria from Messenger's *Fortunio*, and remained the longest in the catalogue, can lay some claim to being one of the most purely beautiful records ever made. The only twelve-inch sides are from *Manon*. The Dream Song has justly been praised as living up to its title: it is a quintessentially French interpretation. Whilst many admire greatly Caruso's recordings of this music, and in purely vocal terms Cazette is not his equal, it is nonetheless the latter who 'knows' des Grieux the better. The point is re-enforced by his rendition of the great Act 3 aria. This is no Manrico ready to think the worst, and it is certainly no Otello. He has long forgiven Manon. The listener knows instinctively what will happen when his beloved returns.

That there is no apparent overlap between the recorded legacies of Cazette and Dalmores is perhaps hardly surprising. The arias from *Grisélidis* are both from the rôle of Alain, but from different parts of the opera: vocally the contrast could hardly be greater.

Stanley Henig

Acknowledgements: Symposium Records thanks the Stuart-Liff Collection for the portrait of Cazette, and Paul Lewis and Adrian Tuddenham for help with the production.

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Louis Cazette



Charles Dalmores

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 Volume 3
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CHARLES
 DALMORES

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|----|---|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Le Prophète (Meyerbeer)-Roi du ciel | B 4395-3 | 25 III 08 |
| 2 | Lohengrin (Wagner)-Attest du nicht | B 11143-1 | 26 X 11 |
| 3 | Il Trovatore (Verdi)-Ah si ben mio | C 4394-1 | 12 IV 07 |
| 4 | Faust (Gounod)-O merveille | C 4254-1 | 19 II 07 |
| 5 | Roméo et Juliette (Gounod)-Ah! lève-toi soleil | C 12537-1 | 24/28 X 12 |
| 6 | Carmen (Bizet)-La fleur que tu m'avais jetée | C 4249-3 | 24/25 X 12 |
| 7 | -La bas dans la montagne | C 6043-2 | 20 III 08 |
| 8 | -Je suis Escamillo | C 4253-1 | 19 II 07 |
| 9 | Samson et Dalila (Massenet)-Arretez, o mes freres | B 11153 | |
| 10 | Les Contes d'Hoffmann (Offenbach)-C'est elle | B 6046-?1 | |
| 11 | -O Dieu, de quelle ivresse | B 6048 | |
| 12 | Grisélidis (Massenet)-Ouvrez-vous sur mon front | C 12538-1 | 25 X 12 |
| 13 | Ninon (Tosti) | C 11142-1 | 26 X 11 |
| 14 | Bon jour, Suzon! (de Musset-Devries) | | |

LOUIS
 CAZETTE

- | | | | |
|----|--|---------------------|----------|
| 15 | Mignon (Thomas)-Je suis heureuse...Ah! que ton âme | BE 318-1 & BS 281-1 | |
| | with Suzanne Brohly | 2 III 22 & 25 IV 22 | |
| 16 | Manon (Massenet)-En fermant les yeux | 03458-2v | 31 V 21 |
| 17 | -Ah! fuyez douce image | 03459-2v | 31 V 21 |
| 18 | Grisélidis (Massenet)-Je suis l'oiseau | BE 215-1 | 1 II 22 |
| 19 | Fortunio (Messager)-J'amaï la vieille maison grise | BS 280-2 | 25 IV 22 |
| 20 | Sérénade (Toselli) | 21758u | 28 X 20 |
| 21 | Le Tango du Rêve (Malderon) | 21760u | 8 XI 20 |

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